



## Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools

Indoor Air Quality (IAQ)

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### NEWS AND EVENTS

- **Attend the Virtual School Walkthrough Webinar.** Join IAQ experts Richard Prill from Washington State University and David Blake from the Northwest Clean Air Agency on a virtual school walkthrough. They will guide you through a comprehensive and effective walkthrough to identify, diagnose and solve common IAQ issues. The webinar will be held Friday, Dec. 9, 2011, 1 p.m. EST. [Register today!](#)
- **Attend EPA's Healthy and Sustainable School Environments Session at the Green Schools National Conference.** EPA representatives will lead a session and present as an exhibitor at the [2nd Annual Green Schools National Conference](#). The session will include effective strategies for managing school environmental health during new construction, renovation and retrofit, and ongoing operations to help schools improve environmental quality, reduce energy use, and support sustainable, green solutions.
- **Access a New Webinar Titled "Care for Their Air: Asthma Pilot Project for Head Start and Child Care Learning Settings."** Hear from representatives of EPA, the Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families, and the Georgia State Department of Health as they share their experiences working with Head Start and Child Care communities in two Georgia counties. [Watch this webinar](#) to learn how you can apply their best practices and resources to create effective partnerships with federal, state and local agencies and integrate asthma education into your local Head Start and Child Care programs.
- **Effective Policies to Reduce Exposures to Pesticides in Schools Webinar:** To promote a national framework for the prevention of chemical incidents in schools, the Interstate Chemical Threats Workgroup has teamed up with the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry to put on a webinar that explores policies to reduce exposures to chemicals in schools. The webinar will be held Thursday, Dec. 15, 2011, 12:30 p.m. EST. [Register today!](#)

#### Update:

Due to competing priorities within a constrained budget, EPA's *IAQ Tools for Schools* program will not host the *IAQ Tools for Schools* National Symposium in 2012. The *IAQ Tools for Schools* National Awards Program has also been deferred for the upcoming year. All other program efforts to improve air quality in schools will continue. Please visit the [IAQ Tools for Schools website](#) for up-to-date guidance and tools and to learn about opportunities to collaborate and connect with stakeholders committed to improving indoor air quality in our nation's schools.

#### Should we have our schools tested for radon? How do we keep mold from returning once it has been removed?

Find answers to these and other questions on the Schools IAQ Connector Email Discussion List. **Join today** by sending a blank email message to [schools\\_iaq\\_connector-subscribe@lists.epa.gov](mailto:schools_iaq_connector-subscribe@lists.epa.gov). Check your email inbox for confirmation and membership details.

#### Access Past E-Newsletters Online

Can't find a past *IAQ Tools for Schools* Connector e-newsletter in your email inbox? No problem! Visit the [e-newsletter archive](#) on the *IAQ Tools for Schools* website to access printable versions (PDF) of all past editions.

## HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS AS IAQ ADVOCATES

**School health professionals**, including school nurses, health aides and others who work in school-based health centers, play an important role in creating healthy indoor school environments. As health care professionals often respond to IAQ-related health issues, they can be powerful advocates for promoting and securing buy-in for IAQ management programs.

Health care professionals can take the following steps to build support for IAQ management programs:

- Communicate and coordinate with school district officials, administrators, facilities staff, parents and students about school policies on environmental health issues.
- Adopt school policies to support **Asthma Action Plans**, student access to inhalers and other asthma medications, and emergency procedures for school staff to use when a student has an asthma attack.
- Encourage parents to make school personnel aware of their child's asthma or allergy condition so that school officials can help the child **avoid triggers**.
- Provide training and educational information to school staff, teachers and students on the importance of addressing environmental health issues.

### Interested in connecting with school health care programs?

Visit [AsthmaCommunityNetwork.org](https://AsthmaCommunityNetwork.org), an online network designed for school and community-based asthma programs and the organizations that support them. Enroll your program or join an existing program serving your community. Members of the Network share advice, resources and tools — helping each other achieve remarkable health and quality of life improvements for people with asthma.



## Q&A WITH PEDIATRICIAN, DR. LANI WHEELER



Dr. Lani Wheeler, MD, FAAP, FASHA, a Senior Scientist for The Cadmus Group, is a public health pediatrician and consultant in environmental health, especially school-based asthma management programs. She chaired the National Asthma Education and Prevention Program's School Education Subcommittee where she represented the American School Health Association. Additionally, Dr. Wheeler serves on the American Academy of Pediatrics Council on School Health Executive Committee where she has authored national guidance and policies on school health. Previously, Dr. Wheeler worked for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on asthma based programs, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Anne Arundel County Department of Health.

### **Q: How does IAQ impact children's health differently than adult health?**

**A:** Poor IAQ impacts children much more than adults. In proportion to their body weight, children breathe more than adults, so their exposure is greater. Physically, their neurological, immunological, respiratory, digestive and other physical systems are still developing and can be more easily harmed by poor IAQ. Their behaviors can also increase exposure; for example, young children play on the floor or ground more than adults.

### **Q: What are some common health symptoms caused by poor IAQ?**

**A:** Symptoms caused by poor IAQ are very broad and depend on the contaminant. Some of the most common symptoms include coughing, sneezing, watery eyes, fatigue, dizziness, headaches and upper respiratory congestion.

### **Q: Why is it important for health professionals to communicate with other school community members about IAQ-related health complaints they receive?**

**A:** IAQ problems need to be identified in order to be corrected. Basic epidemiology — who exhibits what symptoms as well as when and where they experience the symptoms within the school building — can be used to help identify an IAQ problem. Health professionals are important members of school IAQ teams, as they can document and communicate increased symptoms at school.

**Q: What are key steps school nurses and other health care professionals can take to help students manage asthma?**

**A:** Every school needs a school-wide [asthma management plan](#) and an IAQ management plan. Key roles for school nurses include identifying students with asthma; obtaining or constructing an [Asthma Action Plan](#) (AAP) for each student with asthma; and assessing any student whose asthma is not under good control, including ensuring access to medications at school. Ongoing monitoring of students with asthma is critical to ensuring that they keep their asthma under effective control. Key resources for school nurses, including training programs, are available at the American School Health Association's [School Asthma Resource Portal](#).

**Q: What advice do you have for school nurses or other health care professionals working in a school setting?**

**A:** We all want to do our part to help students with asthma be healthy and ready to learn. Each school year, identify the students in your school with asthma. Then assess and monitor them to ensure they have an AAP; prompt access to a quick-relief bronchodilator at school; and monitor their level of asthma control, especially school-related morbidity. Target students with hospitalizations, emergency department visits, and those sent home or who have frequent health office visits due to asthma. These students may benefit from nursing assessments and possible care coordination. Consider those who cannot fully participate in physical activity, too.

Ask your attendance office to develop regular attendance reports for students with chronic conditions, including asthma. Attendance reports don't need to identify the reasons for absence, just an overall attendance percentage. If a student's asthma is under control, their percent attendance should be the same as other students in the same grade. If not, a nursing assessment will identify whether better asthma control may be part of the problem.

Read more about what role [health care professionals](#) can play in school IAQ management and how to [manage asthma in the school environment](#).

## GET ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

Is there a topic you want to see covered in an *IAQ Tools for Schools* Connector e-newsletter? Do you have suggestions for a webinar or e-newsletter feature, or do you have a questions about a specific IAQ topic? If so, send us an email at [IAQTfSConnector@cadmusgroup.com](mailto:IAQTfSConnector@cadmusgroup.com).

**Share YOUR news and events!** Send us information to share with the school IAQ community. It could be featured in the next Connector e-newsletter. Email your news to [IAQTfSConnector@cadmusgroup.com](mailto:IAQTfSConnector@cadmusgroup.com).

The *IAQ Tools for Schools* guidance is a comprehensive resource designed to help schools maintain a healthy environment in school buildings by identifying, correcting and preventing IAQ problems. Learn more about the *IAQ Tools for Schools* guidance at [www.epa.gov/iaq/schools](http://www.epa.gov/iaq/schools).